Invasion,
Intervention,
"Intervasion":

# A Concise History of the U.S. Army in Operation Uphold Democracy

Walter E. Kretchik Robert F. Baumann John T. Fishel



U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Press Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 1998

#### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Kretchik, Walter E. (Walter Edward), 1954-

Intervasion, intervention, "intervasion": a concise history of the U.S. Army in Operation Uphold Democracy / Walter E. Kretchik, Robert F. Baumann, John T. Fishel.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

1. Haiti--History--American intervention, 1994-1995. 2. United States. Army. 3. United Nations-- Armed Forces--Haiti. 4. United States--Miltary policy. I. Baumann, Robert F., 1952-II. Fishel, John T. III. Title.

F1928.2.K74 1997

972.9407'3--dc21

97-29890

CIP

CGSC Press publications cover a variety of military history topics. The views expressed in this CGSC Press publication are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Department of the Army or the Department of Defense.

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#### **Foreword**

In September 1994, U.S. military forces were ordered to execute Operation Uphold Democracy in Haiti. The stated objectives of that undertaking included the return to office of the democratically elected president of that country and the creation of a stable and secure environment in which democratic institutions could take hold. In the short term, these objectives were met: President Aristide reassumed his duties as president, the junta that had ousted him in 1991 was forced to leave the country, and national elections were successfully held in 1996. Although the long-term prognosis for Haiti remains guarded, the democratic process there was given the opportunity to succeed due, in large part, to Operation Uphold Democracy.

The armed forces of the United States have engaged in contingency operations throughout their history, and as the current peace operation in Bosnia demonstrates, they will continue to do so in the foreseeable future. At the time American troops entered Haiti, I was Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army. It was my firm conviction that the Army's experience in Uphold Democracy should be duly recorded, both for posterity and for officers today who have to wrestle with similar, unorthodox situations. The present study is one such contribution to the historical record.

This concise account of the Army's role in Operation Uphold Democracy was written by three faculty members at the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Lieutenant Colonel Walter E. Kretchik and Dr. Robert F. Baumann are members of the Combat Studies Institute, CGSC's history department; Dr. John T. Fishel, at the time this was written, was assigned to the college's Department of Joint and Combined Operations. Their narrative and the conclusions drawn from it are based on an extensive review of available documentary material, interviews with key participants in the operation, discussions with a variety of experts on Haitian affairs, and trips to Haiti to obtain a firsthand appreciation for the situation there.

The result of their analysis is not an uncritical assessment of the Army's activities in Uphold Democracy. Documenting the successes of the operation while ignoring the difficulties and problems encountered by the participants would only distort the record and be of little use today and in the future. What this study does, however, is demonstrate that success is largely dependent on the ability to remain flexible and adapt to continuously changing conditions. It also serves

to increase the data base to which Army officers now and in the future can refer when planning and executing unconventional operations.

GORDON R.SULLIVAN

General, U.S. Army (Retired)

#### **Preface**

German Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke once noted that if an opponent has but three courses available to him, he will chose the fourth. In Operation Uphold Democracy, the U.S. Army's XVIII Airborne Corps was prepared to carry out any of three distinct military operations. None of those operations were in fact executed. Instead, a fourth military option evolved, literally while the operation was unfolding. Former President Jimmy Carter and his team's successful last-minute diplomatic negotiations with the Haitian military junta on September 18, 1994, altered realpolitik and possibly saved many U.S. and Haitian lives. U.S. military commanders, however, had to react immediately to the dynamic political situation and, in doing so, made complex mission adjustments hours before entering Haiti. Those changes caused U.S. Army personnel, and particularly the 10th Mountain Division, to face a different set of operational circumstances than those for which they had prepared mentally. The shift in strategic and operational conditions required great intellectual finesse in mission execution to achieve political objectives and to avoid potential military disaster.

The U.S. Army in Haiti appears to have achieved its overall objective of restoring democracy in that it set the conditions for President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to reassume his presidency. Furthermore, the \$2 billion operation was accomplished with little cost in human life. Yet in deploying the force, the Army had to overcome numerous difficulties associated with peace operations: more frequent deployments, high operational tempo, and confused and uncertain situations. While the media portrayed a fairly confident U.S. force arriving in Haiti for a peace operation, the situation on the ground was actually more perplexing and unpredictable. The resultant turmoil among the force manifested itself not only in mission execution but in the achievement of strategic political objectives, as this study clearly notes.

This study originated from a verbal directive in early 1995 by then-Army Chief of Staff General Gordon R. Sullivan to then-Commander, Combined Arms Center, Lieutenant General John Miller, to write a U.S. Army history of Uphold Democracy. General Sullivan proposed a study that would

prove useful for political and military decision makers. The study, therefore, reflects General Sullivan's vision; it is intended to help decision makers better understand the complexities of modern peace operations.

This book is not an official history. We, the authors, speak our own views based upon our weighing of the evidence at hand. Thus, this history is a public document, written to educate Army officers and to serve as an accounting to the American public of its Army in Operation Uphold Democracy as seen through a military lens.

The Army is a dynamic institution and therefore has a need for honesty and frankness in order to learn from its experiences. With that in mind, we gathered evidence, weighed our findings, and attempted a critical analysis of events and individual participants. We did so without malice or the assumption that we could have done better ourselves. Clausewitz noted that everything in war is simple, yet the simplest task is difficult to accomplish. So it also seems to be with peace operations. Our findings are the result of two military historians and a political scientist investigating evidence and ascertaining how personalities and events shaped military operations. Character judgments are left to the discretion of the reader.

We authors used a wide variety of sources to produce this book. We had access to over 75,000 primary source documents generated by various headquarters who either participated in or supported Operation Uphold Democracy. We also made extensive use of oral history interviews and commentary from U.S. military personnel and Haitians who lived through the day-to-day events in Haiti. We personally went to Haiti to see firsthand where events occurred and to obtain a feel for the conditions that U.S. Army personnel encountered in that country. Those trips proved to be invaluable.

The scope of our investigation embraces but a small portion of the U.S. military's role in Uphold Democracy; our assessment is not all-encompassing. Constraints in time, space, and resources necessitated focusing primarily on the activities of the U.S. Army, and more specifically on those of the active component. Where possible, the study contains information regarding joint, multinational, and reserve component activities to explain better what happened and why. Perhaps other historians can use this study in their areas of concern as a basis for further research publications within their own headquarters.

Finally, this study is unique in that it is the first cooperative effort between the Combat Studies Institute and the Department of Joint and Combined Operations of the Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

Walter E. Kretchik, CSI Robert F. Baumann, CSI John T. Fishel, DJCO

#### Acknowledgments

There are many individuals who proved extremely helpful and without whom this work would have been impossible to finish. Special thanks are in order to Dr. Phil Brookes of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC), Dr. Rick Morris of the Center for Army Lessons Learned, and Dr. John Partin of the U.S. Special Operations Command for funding our numerous trips. We thank the U.S. Army Center of Military History (CMH) for the transcription of many hours of oral history tapes. We are also thankful to Lieutenant Colonel Steve Dietrich, CMH, and Dr. Morris and Captain Jeff Fowler and his staff for the use of over 75,000 primary-source documents collected from units involved in Operation Uphold Democracy. We wish to thank Dr. Partin: Dr. William McClintock, U.S. Atlantic Command Historian: and Major Layton Pennington, Combat Studies Institute (CSI) Research Assistant, for their invaluable help. Mr. Don Gilmore, our editor, deserves special recognition for his painstaking attention to detail.

We also appreciate the reference work conducted by librarians Ms. Elaine McConnell, Ms. Karla Norman, and Ms. Pamela Kontowicz at the Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth. Dr. Bryant Freeman of the University of Kansas' Institute of Haitian Studies provided eyewitness information in reference to the Harlan County incident and other facets of Haitian life under the Cedras-led junta. His experience as an adviser to the United Nations Mission in Haiti was of tremendous value. Dr. Leslie Desmangles, president of the Haitian Studies Association, and his hard-working associate, Alix Contave, provided critical feedback on U.S.-Haitian relations. Many other members of the Haitian Studies Association provided considerable insight into, and firsthand observations of, U.S. Army forces and their activities during Uphold Democracy. Thanks are also due Mr. Otis Van Cecil (USMC, ret.) for his time and recollections.

We are in debt as well to over one hundred CGSC students of all branches and services who shared their personal experiences, conducted research, performed oral histories, and wrote numerous papers for us on the operation. The following students deserve special acknowledgment (listed in random order): Major Christian Klinefelter, Major Marty Urquhart, Major Damian Carr, Major Jean Malone, USMC, Major Robert Young, Lieutenant Commander Donald J. Hurley, USN, Lieutenant Commander Phil Patee, Major Mike Hoyt, Major John Cook, Major Donald McConnaughhay, Major Cheryl

Smart, Major Eric Erkinnen, Lieutenant Colonel Larry J. Godfrey, Major James Boisselle, Major Harvey L. Crockett, Major Douglas D. Trenda, Major Patricia Horoho, Major Michael F. Davino, Major Orlando R. Goodwin, Lieutenant Commander Peter J. A. Riehm, Major Rosemary E. Stewart, Major D. J. Reyes, Major Jiyul Kim, Major Barclay P. Butler, Major Kim Swindall, Major Berthony Ladouceur, Lieutenant Colonel Cas Conaway, Major Chris Hughes, Major Tony Schwalm, Lieutenant Commander Peter Riehm, and Major Leonard Gaddis. One student in particular, Major Robert Shaw, U.S. Army Special Forces, contributed more than was expected; in addition to his student work and Haiti project research while in CGSC and the School for Advanced Military Studies (SAMS), Bob voluntarily accompanied us to Haiti on two occasions where his personal experience proved to be very useful. His enthusiasm for the project and his help were immeasurable. Bob was a member of "Team Haiti" in every respect.

We are also deeply indebted to Major Robert Walsh, Major Walter Pjetra, Captain James Dusenberry, Sergeant First Class James Douglas, Warrant Officer 2 Clifford Hall, First Lieutenant Joseph Prete, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas ("Doc") Adams, and Master Sergeant Frank Norbury.

Finally, we owe recognition to our fellow CSI and Department of Joint and Combined Operations (DJCO) colleagues, who substituted frequently in our classes when we were absent, listened to our concerns, provided feedback on our writing, and offered help freely. We could not ask to serve with a better group of U.S. Army and Department of the Army civilian professionals and educators.

# The Historical Context of American Intervention

#### Robert F. Baumann

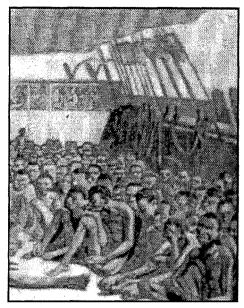
The American decision to head a multinational and then United Nations intervention in Haiti (see map 1) in 1994 may be a portent of closer relations between the two neighbors as they approach their third century of intermittent contact. In truth, the United States has ignored Haiti for most of its history, despite the fact that the two states share some common historical experiences. Columbus reached the island he called Hispaniola in 1492, marking the start of European colonization in the New World. Later, in 1697, the French gained formal control of the western third of the island from Spain. For the next century, French colonial lords made St. Domingue (as Haiti was then known) a source of extraordinary wealth for the home empire. This economic boom was based on large-scale enslavement of West Africans who, unlike the indigenous population, were immune to the diseases introduced by Europeans to the New World.

The Haitian revolution, which followed the American Revolution by only a few years, attracted much attention, but little empathy in the



Map 1. Haiti (with present-day administrative divisions)

United States, Pervasive racial prejudice, sharp cultural differences, and the bloody turmoil of the French Revolution blinded most Americans to the historic import of events in the Caribbean. Only in a single. fleeting episode did the first revolutionary republic in the New World demonstrate any benevolent concern for the second. In September 1799, as Haiti's "great liberator," Toussaint Louverture, struggled to put down a domestic threat to the new revolutionary order in Haiti. President John Adams shipped military supplies to him as a gesture of support. In exchange, Port-au-Prince was



African slaves en route to Haiti

opened to American business interests, and Toussaint pledged to curb pirating. The United States subsequently stood aside as Haitians fought to assert their independence from Napoleonic France.

Haiti's revolution, born of gross inequities and the cruelty characteristic of the French colonial rule of St. Domingue, drew its inspiration from the revolutions of the United States and France. Haiti's course, however, more closely followed the pattern of the latter, where revolution unleashed volatile social forces, resulting in a bloodbath and tyranny. But unlike the French, who had a sufficiently developed civic culture to regain their political balance and rebuild a national consensus, Haitians lacked any recent experience in self-rule and, therefore, were unable to forge a civic consensus. In fact, the vast majority of the populace had only recently escaped the bondage of slavery. Legally, this was achieved by declarations emanating from revolutionary France. In practical terms, Haiti's own revolution confirmed these gains. The legacy of the Haitian revolution, however, was mass illiteracy and a racial caste system.

Even the total overthrow of white rule could not wipe away an obsession with color in Haitian society. A century before its revolution, Haiti contained three classes of free people: the grands blancs, the



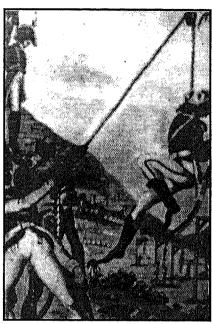
Haitians fighting the French Army

petits blancs, and the gens de couleur. If the white population of the first two classes recognized social distinction among themselves based on wealth, the third group was marked by its mixed European and African ancestry. The mixed blood or mulatto population exercised the political rights of free Frenchmen, shared in the wealth of the country, owned slaves, and even sent their children to Paris for a French education. The only population fully excluded from wealth and society was the large mass of black slaves, many recent arrivals from West Africa.

Tension between the white and mulatto populations, accompanied by the loss of political rights among the latter, arose in the middle of the eighteenth century. By the 1790s, the influence of the French Revolution fundamentally destabilized colonial Haiti. Notions of freedom and equality were at odds with Haiti's social structure. Fearful of losing their power and privilege, most French landowners in Haiti remained fiercely determined to maintain exclusive social control, despite the onset of rapid ideological and social change that engulfed France. In some instances, the French colonial masters, believing that they could suppress any incipient notions of freedom, began to practice a brutality towards their slaves unprecedented even in Haiti. The colonists' intuition concerning a loss of power was correct, but their methods failed utterly to stem the coming tide.<sup>2</sup> In 1791, northern Haiti became the scene of a series of massacres

of whites by slaves in revolt. Reports abounded that Voodoo religious ceremonies provided the focal point for the organization of resistance. What followed was a grim and merciless struggle for dominance. As one scholar of Haiti put it, "the reign of terror in France was decorous by comparison."

Amid the bloody chaos in Haiti, British and Spanish troops intervened in hopes of snatching the rich prize of St. Domingue from France. Here emerged the remarkable General Toussaint Louverture, a former Haitian slave, who earned a considerable military reputation battling the invaders and, in 1801, actually gained temporary control of the entire



Haitian revolutionaries hanging Frenchmen

island of Hispaniola. His army, which consisted predominantly of former slaves and at its peak surpassed 20,000 soldiers, astonished foreign observers with its performance in battle. 4 Moreover, Toussaint possessed the diplomatic acumen to exploit the ambitions of the rival European powers by playing one against another. Subsequently, as Haiti divided racially against itself, Toussaint assumed the mantle of leadership of the black revolution. Sensing the urgency of ending civil war and consolidating political control, Toussaint issued a decree vaguely reminiscent of the levée en masse that had mobilized the French populace for military service or labor. Toussaint's decree included a blunt warning: "All overseers, drivers, and field laborers who will not perform with assiduity the duties required of them shall be arrested and punished as severely as soldiers deviating from their duty."5 Toussaint's extraordinary leadership earned grudging admiration, even in Europe, but he attracted powerful enemies as well. especially after proclaiming himself military governor of St. Domingue for life in 1801.

The next year, Napoleon sent an army of 17,000 under General Victor-Emmanuel Leclerc to restore French authority in Haiti. Leclerc

enjoyed initial success in the coastal cities and towns, which easily succumbed to conventional tactics and firepower. Anticipating a French victory, Toussaint's rival commanders maneuvered to ingratiate themselves with the French, even to the point of changing sides. Forced to seek a diplomatic solution, Toussaint was tricked into a meeting where he was seized for deportation to France. Still, resistance continued under new leaders, and French forces, worn down by combat and the severe environment, and then ravaged by yellow fever, withdrew in 1803. Ultimately, the French failed despite the dispatch of over 50,000 troops to Haiti. This defeat so



General Toussaint Louverture

weakened French influence in the New World that a cash-strapped Napoleon elected to sell the Louisiana Territory to the United States.<sup>6</sup>

On January 1, 1804, the Haitian Republic proclaimed its independence. However, as observed by historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "Political independence only increased the gap between leaders and producers, because while it confirmed the end of slavery, it also confirmed the existence of the state that embodied the gap." Those who led the state were predominantly mulattos who had been free before the revolution and believed in the perpetuation of a plantation economy. The laborers, in turn, were blacks, a good many recent arrivals from West Africa who gained freedom through the revolution. Lacking visionary leadership, education, and organization, they could not effectively turn their numerical superiority to political advantage. Consequently, Haiti's independence scarcely signified an end to wanton exploitation of agricultural laborers.<sup>7</sup>

In a gesture that foreshadowed future trials, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, an illiterate general who had served with Toussaint and personally revived resistance against France after Toussaint's arrest in 1802, named himself governor-general for life. Opposed by the mulatto elite for his intention to nationalize vast tracts of land, Dessalines was murdered in 1806. General Henri Christophe, a black who had fought with a French contingent on the side of the American Revolution at

Savannah, assumed power in 1807 only to find his position challenged by General Alexandre Petion, a mulatto who soon dominated southern Haiti. In the meantime, reflecting the social paradox of Haiti's revolution, Christophe banned whips as emblematic of the curse of slavery, even as he affirmed the resumption of legal bondage of laborers to the soil.

Reunified under Jean-Pierre Boyer in 1820, Haiti brought Santo Domingo (the modern Dominican Republic) under its sway and held it until 1843. In that year, following Boyer's fall, Haiti plunged anew into chaos. From that moment forward, Haitian political life remained in perpetual, bloody turmoil. Between 1843 and 1915, Haiti had twenty-two heads of state, of whom fourteen were deposed and only one served a complete term of office.<sup>8</sup>

For over half of the nineteenth century, the United States did not recognize the Republic of Haiti. Politicians of the slave-holding Southern states could only look on the black revolution in that country with fear and loathing. Furthermore, to confer legitimacy on the Haitian regime through the extension of diplomatic relations would pose an implicit threat to the ideological foundations of slavery in the United States. The political isolation of Haiti, however, did not imply commercial isolation. U.S. trade ties with the black republic remained robust. Otherwise, aside from a few Southern fantasies of the extension of an American slave-holding empire across the Caribbean, Americans took little political interest in the fledgling republic.

American recognition of Haiti came only in 1862, when the United States was torn by a civil war caused, in large part, by the long-smoldering dispute over slavery. Still, diplomatic acknowledgment hardly signified an equal relationship. U.S. policy towards Haiti until the First World War focused on maintaining commercial relations and curbing the influence of foreign powers, especially Germany, in the country. American diplomats demonstrated a particular interest in the northwestern harbor of the Môle St. Nicolas as a potential naval base, <sup>10</sup> and U.S. Marines paid intermittent visits to Haiti, even serving as debt collectors on at least one occasion.

All the while, Haiti remained beset by domestic turmoil, political revolts, assassinations, and extreme social divisions that left it vulnerable to foreign intrigue and financial domination. An economy specializing in the production of agricultural goods for export preserved a deep social chasm between the tiny, wealthy, predominantly mulatto elite and an impoverished black peasantry. Futhermore, economic mismanagement and periodic rebellions

fostered a steady erosion of the civic ethos and the entrenchment of strongman politics. The resultant chaos contributed to an attendant decline in living conditions.

The convergence of Haiti's misery with America's abrupt turn towards an assertive global policy at the turn of the century set the stage for the U.S. occupation of Haiti in 1915. The opening of the Panama Canal in 1914 elevated the strategic importance of Haiti and Windward Passage in American eyes, at the very time that the outbreak of World War I raised concerns about the expansion of German influence in the Caribbean. Nonetheless, the proximate cause of the occupation was a furious new



Emperor Faustin Soulouque, 1847-59

round of political unrest from 1911 to 1915, during which Haiti had seven presidents. The brutal, public murder of Haitian President Guillaume Sam by an enraged mob in the streets of Port-au-Prince on July 27, 1915, prompted the dispatch a day later of a battalion of U.S. Marines from the USS Washington, which had been positioned offshore under the command of Rear Admiral William Banks Caperton, ostensibly to ensure the safety of the foreign community. Caperton took charge on the scene, and the Marines moved swiftly to establish order. In the process, the United States imposed a treaty on the new American-backed Haitian president, Philippe Dartiguenave. The terms included creation of a customs receivership and provided for extensive American intrusion in the management of the Haitian economy. Although the United States also proposed to undertake a series of benevolent projects, ranging from sanitation works, to agricultural assistance, to spreading public education, the intrusiveness of America's presence could hardly fail to stir deep-seated native resentment.

As the Americans settled in to restore order across the country, the Marines encountered assorted bands of "cacos," mercenary fighters from the rugged interior of the country who typically found employment in Haiti's struggles for political power. Under ambiguous

and confusing circumstances, young Marine officers often found themselves attempting to conduct negotiations with caco chieftains, a task for which they had received no special preparation.

Cultural appreciation of Haiti was sadly lacking. As late as 1929, according to one Marine veteran, there was no special preparation of any kind for deployment to Haiti, only standard basic training at Parris Island. Indeed, Marine trainees sometimes learned of their destination only days before departure.<sup>11</sup>

Because events in Europe commanded the international spotlight, Marines in Haiti found themselves with little political supervision, especially following the American entry into the First World War in 1917. The Marines established small garrison posts across the country in an effort to maintain political and social order. Among the most successful methods of control was the bribing of resistance leaders and groups to obtain the surrender of their persons or their arms. <sup>12</sup>

The effect of American racial prejudice in Haiti during the occupation remains the subject of scholarly dispute, but at least some adverse consequences were inevitable. Though the Marines maintained a veneer of polite civility with Haitian leaders, many Americans, in private, voiced contempt for the native leadership and the populace as a whole. Unlike the foreign businessmen in Haiti, who made some effort at racial accommodation, the Marines insisted on establishing the Jim Crow standards of the American South as soon as they settled in and U.S. dependents began arriving. <sup>13</sup> One tragic irony was that American attitudes aggravated the racial polarization between mulattos and blacks, already deeply rooted in Haitian society. In fact, Haiti's lighter-complected native mulatto elite, deeply resentful of the arrogant conduct of white Americans, found in those same attitudes moral confirmation of their own social station relative to the mass of black Haitians. And for good measure, Haiti's upper class held black Americans in the same low regard heretofore reserved for the black Haitian majority. One consequence was that President Harding found himself unable to appoint black Republicans to diplomatic posts in Haiti. This fact sustained the appearance of the American presence as all white. 14 In the end, racism had a poisonous influence on what was already a dubious American presence.

At their best, the Americans sought to modernize the Haitian infrastructure and create a foundation for modernization and stability. That U.S. commercial interests would be well served in the process was doubtless true, although it would be easy to overestimate the wealth that flowed to American citizens as a result. Given the prevalent disorder in

Haitian society as well as its dilapidated infrastructure, prospects for near-term economic development were modest. The United States, however, did make a reasonable effort to bring improvements to Haiti. even if those improvements did not necessarily fit comfortably into the native culture. Because U.S.-engineered social change threatened to disrupt the prevailing social order, Haiti's upper class proved uncooperative. For example, American accounting practices and restrictions on political patronage aroused the resentment of Haitian officials accustomed to plundering the national treasury. Furthermore, American-sponsored efforts to bring education to the peasantry met with considerable resistance. 15 In the minds of at least some of the native elite, the idea of spreading literacy and basic learning among Haiti's downtrodden seemed calculated only to engender discontent in what was already a most volatile culture. In addition, many educated Haitians prized their French cultural heritage and held Americans in contempt for their crass materialism. As one literate Haitian put it, the Americans were "parvenus in matters of intellect understanding."16

Overall, American programs to assist Haiti left a checkered legacy. While efforts to distribute food and provide limited medical assistance were welcome and useful in the short term, the drive to remake Haitian government left much to be desired. In light of rampant corruption and inefficiency, <sup>17</sup> it made sense for Americans to assume control of customs and many local administrative functions. Foreign usurpation of basic institutions, however, did little to prepare Haiti for the inevitable American departure years down the road. In fact, the United States would not completely relinquish its hold on Haitian fiscal affairs until 1947, thirteen years after the Marines' departure.

Meanwhile, the American occupation force confronted a sporadic guerrilla resistance carried out by bands of ill-trained cacos drawn mainly from the northern interior of Haiti. Armed opposition to the U.S. presence initially took the form of harassment, through cutting the movement of food supplies to the cities, disruption of rail lines, and occasional raids. The Marines put a stop to these activities, not so much through combat as through cash subsidies in return either for negotiated surrender or the turn in of weapons. In some cases, however, Marines were compelled to pursue and destroy armed bands, which had the effect of encouraging others to comply peacefully with American demands. <sup>18</sup>

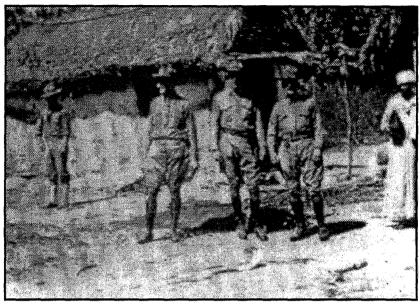
One well-chronicled pursuit was led by Captain Smedley Butler (later a colonel during the occupation, and subsequently a general after

his return to the United States), who was one of four Americans to earn the Medal of Honor for service in Haiti. Brash and self-confident, Butler had little use for complex campaign plans and disdained elaborate logistical support. In a memoir, he described his commander as "overeducated" and "afraid to run risks." When in 1915 it became apparent that the Marines were going to have to clear the zone between Cap Haitien and Fort Liberté, Butler scoffed at a plan calling for a sweep by six battalions. Instead, he requested the sum of \$200 to outfit a force of twenty-seven men with four dozen pack animals, rations, and a machine gun. <sup>19</sup>

As Butler later related his experience, the cacos had such poor trail discipline that it was possible to track them through the jungle by following discarded orange peels.<sup>20</sup> The main risk was from ambush by the poorly armed cacos, most of whom did not even possess outdated black powder rifles.<sup>21</sup> If they sensed advantage, the cacos were capable of a ferocious attack. The key, therefore, was to compel them to fight positional battles. Because the cacos tended to withdraw into old fortifications, the Marines gained the opportunity to exploit their tactical training. Butler reported sweeping one such fort and then spending an entire night hunting down caco fugitives. By his estimate, the Marines suffered one man wounded, while killing seventy-five cacos.<sup>22</sup>

In a subsequent assault against a relatively formidable caco stronghold at Ft. Riviere on November 16, 1915, Butler divided a 100-man force into four columns that were to attack along converging lines. Approaching the rugged stone fort over steep terrain proved difficult under fire. Once a penetration was achieved, the cacos offered bold hand-to-hand resistance but were quickly defeated due to the lack of any tactical organization. As a reward for his exploits, Butler received a splendid horse as a gift from President Dartiguenave. <sup>23</sup>

Generally, the problem of defeating the cacos boiled down to an issue of terrain and communications infrastructure. The Marines were vastly better armed. More important, their discipline and tactical cohesion guaranteed their superiority in any pitched combat. In a classic guerrilla scenario, however, the cacos were far more knowledgeable of the topography and could easily withdraw into the mountains or jungle interior, where the Marines' advantages were easily negated. The Marine mission, therefore, soon focused on establishing security in the major cities and developing the indigenous road network to permit easier and swifter travel. The Marines' modus operandi entailed sending small patrols under the command of

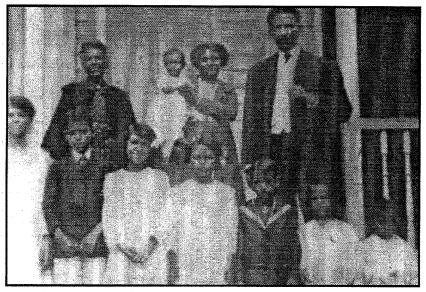


U.S. Marine occupation officers

lieutenants or senior noncommissioned officers around the country, many operating from temporary outposts.<sup>24</sup>

In addition, the Marines formed a Haitian gendarmerie to be commanded temporarily by American officers. Conceptually, the gendarmerie adhered to standard American principles. The intent was to guarantee that an armed force would be subordinate to civilian authority so as to minimize the threat of a military takeover. Equally important, the Americans also aimed at establishing a professional ethos that would keep the military out of politics. That American-style controls would not long be effective in the Haitian culture of strongman politics was a reality few Marines could grasp at the time.

The mere act of creating a gendarmerie under American control in 1915 met stubborn resistance in the Haitian National Assembly, causing Butler, in what by his own account was a highhanded maneuver, to threaten to use force to obtain cabinet support for the American position.<sup>25</sup> As the United States later learned when it tried to fill officer vacancies in the gendarmerie, native opposition transcended the halls of government in Port-au-Prince. Neither educated Haitians, most of whom perceived such service to be beneath their social station, nor American Marines, needed at first to provide leadership and role models, initially proved anxious to accept positions. Indeed, according



Haitian elites, early 1900s

to Haitian scholar Michel Laguerre, numerous young Haitians feared becoming social outcasts as a result of collaboration with the American occupation and were further put off by the pervasive racial prejudice evidenced by the American community in Haiti.<sup>26</sup>

One of those Marines who did accept a post in the gendarmerie was Smedley Butler, who assumed the rank of lieutenant colonel and inherited a broad job description. As he recounted: "Commanding the gendarmerie required versatility. My duties seemed to involve everything from filling a cabinet vacancy to buying and equipping a navy."27 Enough Americans were eventually lured by special incentives, such as forty-five days annual leave outside Haiti and inflated salaries, to get the program started. Still, the requirement to learn elementary Creole proved an impediment to many would-be volunteers. Initially, a contingent of 120 U.S. Marines provided training for 2,600 Haitians, and by February 1916, the new gendarmerie began its duties.<sup>28</sup> Thereafter, the commissioning of Haitian officers occurred little by little, through promotions from the enlisted ranks. The creation of the École Militaire in 1928 formalized the process and improved the preparation of officer candidates for what came to be known as the Garde d'Haiti. In any event, Americans remained on top of the command hierarchy.

Meanwhile, serving as officers in scattered districts across Haiti, Marines ended up, by default, exercising a host of judicial and civil functions, all without a basic grasp of Haitian Creole. As the conduit for government funds to localities, they managed budgets for everything from paying school teachers to public works projects. Given such an extraordinarily broad mission, it is amazing that the American Marines did as well as they did. On the other hand, such circumstances virtually assured a degree of mismanagement and abuse of power.

The blessing and curse of American interference was especially brought to light by the program to rebuild Haiti's antiquated road network. Lacking funds for such a large undertaking, Smedley Butler, who became the Marine commander in Haiti, turned to the expedient measure of conscripting native labor, as allowed by the nearly forgotten Haitian law of 1864 that permitted the drafting of peasants for road construction. The requisition of labor was not necessary, initially, because workers were asked to perform a service in areas near their homes, or pay a tax in lieu of service. Conscription policy, however, was adopted when workers proved reluctant to follow the proposed construction into the lightly populated interior of the country. While the construction of roads progressed significantly, the political side effects were poisonous. In the first place, the employment of conscripted labor in a society whose cultural memory had been indelibly seared by the experience of slavery, followed by a century of general impoverishment and exploitation, was bound to arouse hostility. Second, when rebellion subsequently prompted resort to such harsh and demeaning measures as the roping together of workers, as though the men were convicts or slave gangs, even Americans came to question both the purpose and propriety of such methods.<sup>29</sup>

Termination of conscripted labor in October 1918 occurred too late to prevent a revival of caco resistance under the leadership of Charlemagne Peralte, an educated former Haitian army captain. Furthermore, the extension of conscript labor in the north and interior of Haiti by a Marine district commander in violation of the termination order helped to focus discontent on the region of Haiti historically prone to rebellion. An official investigation found the district commander responsible for fostering a "reign of terror," which resulted in his being relieved, but the damage done was irreversible. Official figures for the year 1919 indicated that 1,861 Haitians had been killed in the course of the American antiguerrilla campaign. The burden of

prosecuting the campaign fell mainly on the Marines, who had not trained the gendarmerie for combat missions.<sup>30</sup>

As in most wars by conventional powers against guerrilla insurgents. the Marines found that the rebels blended into the countryside in such a way as to make it impossible for an outsider to distinguish friend from foe. The lack of Creole speakers on the American side almost certainly exacerbated the problem. Exhausting hunts deep into the jungle interior under extraordinarily stressful climatic conditions taxed the staming of the Marines to the limit. Communication among separated units remained difficult before the ready availability of portable radios. Along the way, the Americans doubtless killed an untold number of innocents, and executions of prisoners reportedly numbered in the hundreds. Particular brutality towards prisoners in the region around Hinche was attributed to the orders of district commander Major Clark Wells, who was never formally charged and prosecuted. Investigations did little to illuminate the situation, but the Marine Corps did communicate to the field in October 1919 that such conduct was unacceptable.<sup>31</sup> Public allegations were sufficient, however, to stir political attacks on the Wilson administration at home. With his assumption of office in 1921, Republican President Warren Harding promised to chart a new course.

No longer distracted by World War I, the United States during Harding's term began to look more attentively at developments in Haiti. In 1922, the administration selected Brigadier General John H. Russell, a man with innate diplomatic talent and a French-speaking wife, as the high commissioner in Haiti to oversee the American occupation with a new face and emphasis. In turn, President Dartiguenave was replaced by Louis Borno, whom the Americans judged a more suitable partner given his relatively benign view of the foreign presence. Meanwhile, a major component of the reorganization of the occupation was the delivery of a loan to finance Haiti's foreign debt, a loan that, in turn, justified continued occupation to protect the interests of American creditors.<sup>32</sup>

Overall, Haiti remained relatively calm and stable after the first four years of American occupation. During this time, the most important project for the country's long-term future was the development of the Garde d'Haiti. As time passed, the Marines gradually turned over greater responsibility for control of the force to the Haitians, as reflected in the steady increase from 1919 in the number of native officers. Not until 1931, however, did Haitians constitute a majority of the Garde's officers. (See table 1.)

End of Year	Haltian officers	U.S officers	Total	% Haitian officers
1915	0	123	123	0
1916	0	123	123	0
1917	0	113	113	0
1918	0	113	113	0
1919	3	108	111	2.7
1920	9	110	119	7.6
1921	9	108	117	7.7
1922	23	115	138	16.7
1923	22	107	139	17.0
1924	40	123	163	24.5
1925	53	128	181	29.2
1926	54	125	179	30.0
1927	53	128	181	29.2
1928	60	121	181	33.1
1929	78	119	197	39.6
1930	73	108	181	40.3
1931	109	87	196	55.6 <sup>33</sup>

Table 1. Officer composition of the Haitian Army

The extent of Haitian personnel in the force was further reflected by the fact that, at the end of 1931, 84.6 percent of junior grade officers and lower were Haitians, and 40 percent of all district commanders were Haitian. The latter included the important Military Departments of the Center and West. The composition of the officer corps of the Garde d'Haiti evolved according to a timetable established by the Herbert Hoover administration for the total withdrawal of U.S. officers by the end of 1936. By that time, there were 199 Haitian officers in all, headed by a major general. The goal of the force was primarily to maintain domestic security. As of 1931, the principal duties of the Garde d'Haiti included the prevention of smuggling, the construction and maintenance of trails, the control of arms and ammunition throughout the republic, providing assistance to the government bureaucracy in the delivery of official paychecks, supervision of the prisons, providing security for tax collectors, protecting the president, the upkeep of landing fields for Marine aircraft, and the gathering of intelligence. In the event of war, the enlistment and training of new recruits would have been necessary.34

By 1932, official Marine assessments of the Garde d'Haiti were highly favorable: "In general, due to the fact that no organized banditry

has existed in Haiti during recent years, the activities of the Garde have been confined to military and police duties." Haitian guardsmen were further described as "loyal, courageous and efficient" in the performance of their duties, including actions against the cacos and the suppression of civil disorders. Activity was particularly brisk along the border with the Dominican Republic, where large amounts of contraband weapons were seized. Haitian prisons at that time held a population of 3,044 among a population of 2.2 million. <sup>35</sup> Pay, which ranged from \$10 per month for a private to \$250 per month for a major general, was lavish by Haitian standards. <sup>36</sup>

Training and education in the Garde d'Haiti also gave evidence of the maturation of the force. In 1931, of 1,219 men tested for marksmanship, 918 or 86.9 percent met qualifying standards. Meanwhile, at the École Militaire, where 100 percent met the standards, admission was based on competitive examination. The curriculum focused on cultivation of infantry skills, administrative law, quartermaster duties, and guard and ceremonial roles. The program was patterned after instruction on police methods and basic tactics for dealing with unruly mobs as conducted at the U.S. Infantry School at Ft. Benning.<sup>37</sup>

Development of the Garde d'Haiti did much to advance the centralization of authority in Port-au-Prince. The creation of a communications infrastructure of roads and telephone and telegraph lines, with the capital as its hub, greatly eased the problem of central control.<sup>38</sup> Combined with the disarming of the populace in the hinterlands, the establishment of a capable national military force reduced the risk of rebel movements forming in the countryside to overthrow the regime.

By their conduct, however, the Americans undermined their vision of a politically detached, professional military organization. As Laguerre notes, "During the entire period of the occupation, it was evident to any observer that control of the country was not in the hands of the Haitian president, but rather of the US Marines." Smedley Butler corroborated this interpretation in his memoirs. As the only organized armed force in Haiti, the Garde d'Haiti was well situated to pick up where its American mentors left off. Within ten years of the Marines' departure, the Haitian Army conducted its first coup d'état.

The generally condescending tone of the U.S. occupation also served to undermine the American interest in shaping future Haitian politics and civil society. As outsiders, Americans were able to discern that Haiti was rife with factionalism, beset by racial and class

antagonism, and weakened by ceaseless political turbulence. Further, they could at least dimly understand Haitian pride at their historic liberation from the French colonialists. Many complexities of Haitian culture, however, particularly those rooted deeply in African tradition—Voodoo and its distinctively intertwined relationship with Catholicism, the role of secret societies, and rich interpretations of the spirit world—were simply unknown, ignored, or prohibited by Americans. The ban on Voodoo, not always strictly enforced in practice, illustrated American disregard for a fundamental part of Haitian religious and spiritual life. The American rationale for the ban was based on the historic connection between clandestine groups and the instability of Haitian political life. The actual impact of the prohibition on Voodoo ceremony, of course, worked in a way diametrically opposed to its intent. By stubbornly applying their own sociopolitical template to analysis of Haiti, Americans often found themselves unable to gain compliance with their prohibitions except through the use of force or intimidation. Ultimately, the occupation energized civil opposition to the American presence that resonated as far away as Harlem, a gathering place in the United States for many prominent oppositionist Haitian emigres. Student strikes at Haiti's schools of agriculture, medicine, and law in 1929 garnered popular support against the occupation. The situation deteriorated rapidly as U.S. Marines lost control of an unruly crowd of protesters on December 5 in Les Cayes, opened fire, and killed about a dozen Haitians. 40 These and other events necessarily forced the Haitian government to distance itself from the American presence.

Shortly thereafter, President Hoover formed a commission under Cameron Forbes, a prominent Boston attorney and former governor of the Philippines, to investigate conditions in Haiti and recommend a course leading to American withdrawal. The eventual date of the U.S. departure became Haiti's second "independence day." In the long run, American contributions to the social infrastructure in Haiti, by no means insignificant, were less enduring than the legacy of resentment and the failure to transform Haiti's political culture.

During the 1940s and 1950s, a relative calm prevailed, and Haitian politics reverted to its accustomed pattern. Economic crisis, corrupt and mildly repressive rule, social stagnation, and pompous, officially declared nonsense held sway. American writer, Herb Gold, who visited Haiti in 1953 for an extended stay, subsequently referred to that time as "The Golden Age of Strange." "Later," Gold observed, "after the long havoc of the Duvaliers . . . the negligent corruption of General

[Paul] Magloire [president from 1950 to 1956] came to be remembered with nostalgia." With characteristically delusionary rhetoric, government radio proclaimed one day, "The General of Division Paul E. Magloire is a conqueror unequaled in history since Julius Caesar and Alexander the Great." In like spirit, a newspaper column intoned, "The smile of His Excellency is the best guarantee of our liberties." The "guarantee" crumbled along with Magloire's popularity, and he relinquished the presidency in December 1956.

The election of President Francois ("Papa Doc") Duvalier in 1957 ushered in the modern phase of Haitian political life. Duvalier, taking power at age fifty, possessed a medical degree and lengthy experience in the public health field. His unassuming manner impressed foreign observers. Philosophically, he espoused "negritude," a blend of Voodoo, mysticism, and a spiritual reverence for Africa. Gradually, paranoia and a willingness to rule by terror became the trademarks of his presidency. In 1966, he declared himself "president for life." 43

Fully cognizant of the role of the army in politics, Duvalier reconfigured the political-military balance of power by creating a presidential guard in 1959 under his exclusive control. To curtail the independence of the army, he selectively purged the officer corps and in 1961 closed the Haitian Military Academy, thereby assuring the appointment from the ranks of officers more loyal to himself.<sup>44</sup> Duvalier further strengthened his grip on power with the founding of the Tonton Macoute (Haitian militia). This ill-trained body, which soon substantially outnumbered the army, operated as hired political thugs around the country at the behest of the Duvalier regime.<sup>45</sup> A signature political characteristic of Duvalier's rule was the symbolic transfer (somewhat illusory in fact) of influence away from the mulatto elite to a populist black leadership that purported to represent the majority of the populace.<sup>46</sup> In reality, the regime acted strictly in its own narrow interests, playing various constituencies off against one In addition, Duvalier skillfully manipulated American another. anticommunism to enlist outside financial and material support, much of the latter in the form of weapons. Later, in 1971, the United States financed the training of a special counterinsurgency force in Haiti known as the Leopards.

Perhaps the most emblematic gesture of Papa Doc's tenure was a referendum ensuring the direct succession of his son, Jean-Claude, which carried by the absurd total of 2,391,916 to 0!<sup>47</sup> Just months later, in April 1971, Papa Doc died, and the succession was consummated. However, Jean-Claude Duvalier, also known as "Baby Doc," took little

interest in the art of government, even for the purpose of maintaining his own power. Tossing a \$2 million wedding for his bride, Michele Bennett, who just happened to be the daughter of a rich mulatto, eventually helped undermine his popularity. When by 1980 swarms of Haitian refugees in small vessels began making their way across the Caribbean in significant numbers, Duvalier's extravagance attracted unwanted international attention. In the meantime, U.S. media interest focused on the prevalent corruption and squalor in Haiti, arousing public pressure on the American government to withdraw support. Antiregime conspiracies hatched among Haitian army officers and other important and disaffected constituencies. Widespread outbreaks of unrest across Haiti placed the regime on the brink of collapse. Duvalier, sensing the inevitable and lacking the will to resist, resigned in 1986 and departed Haiti for a life in exile.

Duvalier's absence hardly solved Haiti's political crisis, for none of the underlying factors contributing to Duvalierism, or what is widely referred to as the "predator state," had vanished with him. Jean-Claude gave way to a junta led by Lieutenant General Henri Namphy. To create a semblance of legitimacy, the junta orchestrated the election of Professor Leslie Manigat, who lasted only five months in the presidency before Namphy claimed the office for himself in June 1988. Namphy, in turn, lasted about three months before his ouster by Prosper Avril. Avril served over a year before yielding to an interim presidency, which was followed in 1990 by the election of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Aristide's election, while reflective of popular support for the charismatic priest, did not signify a basic change in Haiti's political culture. As an outspoken advocate for society's have-nots, frequently through the medium of Catholic and Voodoo theology, Aristide was deeply involved in the bitter societal conflict that dominated Haitian politics. Once a relatively obscure priest at St. Jean Bosco church in the impoverished community of La Saline, Aristide had emerged as a national figure in 1986 by virtue of his courageous public criticism of the Duvalier regime. Moreover, his ability to survive attempted assassination conferred on him an extraordinary mystique among Haiti's poor. In the policy arena, Aristide condemned capitalism and embraced a vaguely defined brand of socialism. Defenders of the social status quo reflexively viewed his politics as revolutionary, fearing not only loss of wealth and prerogatives but the revenge of the masses.

As president, Aristide faced formidable challenges. Lacking practical political experience, he possessed neither the tact nor pragmatism needed to lead his tormented country to a social consensus.

Indeed, his sometimes inflammatory rhetoric had quite the opposite effect, troubling even some Haitian moderates and many potential supporters in the United States. Particularly disquieting to some observers was his failure in January 1991 to denounce mob attacks on the Vatican's diplomatic mission, seen as a symbol of the ruling order in Haiti.<sup>49</sup> Hard evidence of American and international reserve towards Aristide was the minimal matériel support extended to the new government during its brief hold on power.<sup>50</sup>

With Aristide's ouster by a military coup on September 30, 1991, the elements of a new crisis involving the United States were in place. Haiti's latest junta was led by Lieutenant General Raoul Cedras, Aristide's hand-picked chief of staff of the army and a member of the first class to graduate from the Haitian Military Academy after its reestablishment in 1972. International outrage, fueled in large part by the well-publicized flotilla of "boat people" bound for Florida, put Haiti abruptly in the international spotlight. For the Bush administration, Haiti's crisis was an unwelcome distraction at a time when attention was riveted on the death throes of the Soviet Union and the aftermath of the Gulf War. For the U.S. military, which would be summoned to play a role in restoring the fledgling democracy, events in Haiti came at a time of important institutional transition. Sweeping change in the international environment signaled changes in priorities, force structure, and missions.

#### **Notes**

#### Chapter 1

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- 3. Leyburn, The Haitian People, 22-23.
- Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Silencing the Past (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 37. For an account from the perspective of the invaders, see Roger Norman Baily, ed., The Haitian Journal of Lieutenant Howard, York Hussars, 1796-98 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1985).
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- Leyburn, The Haitian People, 33; Heinl and Heinl, Written in Blood, 95–125. See also Thomas Madiou, Histoire D'Haiti, T. 2, 3 (Port-au-Prince, Haiti, 1923). Also invaluable for understanding this subject was an interview with Dr. Bryant Freeman, director of the Haitian Studies Center at the University of Kansas, May 5, 1997.
- 7. Trouillot, Haiti: State Against Nation, the Origins and Legitimacy of Duvalierism (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990), 45.
- 8. Leyburn, The Haitian People, 66-69.

- 9. See Robert May, *The Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire*, 1854–1861 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973); James McPherson, *The Battle Cry of Freedom* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988), 103–16; Paul Farmer, *The Uses of Haiti* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1994), 73–78.
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- 12. Hans Schmidt, The U.S. Occupation of Haiti (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1971), 83. For a review of U.S. policy on the eve of the intervention in Haiti, see Brenda Gayle Plummer, Haiti and the Great Powers, 1902-1915 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988). For another valuable account of the U.S. occupation in Haiti, see David Healy, "The U.S. Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934," in Haitian Frustrations: Dilemmas for U.S. Policy, ed., Georges A. Fauriol (Washington, D.C.: The Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1995), 36-45; Arthur C. Millspaugh, Haiti Under American Control, 1915-1930 (Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1931). For the story of one of the more bizarre episodes of the occupation, see W. B. Seabrook, The Magic Island (New York: The Literary Guild of America, 1929). Seabrook recounts the tale of Faustin Wirkus, a Marine, who when visiting La Gonave was taken for a figure in local prophecy and made royalty.
- 13. Schmidt, The U.S. Occupation of Haiti, 136.
- 14. Ibid., 141; Peter Bunce, "Foundation on Sand," unpublished manuscript, 46.
- 15. Bunce, "Foundation on Sand," 24; Heinl and Heinl, Written in Blood, 477; telephone conversation between Dr. Robert Baumann and Dr. Bryant Freeman, August 5, 1997.

- 16. Emily Greene Balch, *Occupied Haiti* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1972), 179.
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- 21. Graham A. Cosmas, "Cacos and Caudillos: Marines and Counterinsurgency in Hispaniola, 1915–1924," in eds., William Roberts and Jack Sweetman, New Interpretations in Naval History: Selected Papers from the Ninth Naval History Symposium Held at the United States Naval Academy, October 1989 (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1991), 283–308.
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- 23. Ibid., 201-8.
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- 26. Michel S. Laguerre, *The Military and Society in Haiti* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1993), 73.
- 27. Thomas, Old Gimlet Eye, 222.
- 28. Ibid., 210. Van Cecil Interview, January 16, 1997. Van Cecil relates how he contemplated joining the Haitian Army for the pay but was held back, in part, by the requirement to learn Creole.
- 29. Schmidt, *The U.S. Occupation of Haiti*, 100–101, and Balch, 125. See also Millspaugh.
- 30. Schmidt, The U.S. Occupation of Haiti, 102-3.
- 31. Ibid., 104-5; Heinl and Heinl, Written in Blood, 440-41.

- 32. Schmidt, 131-33.
- 33. United States Marine Corps, *Republic of Haiti* (Washington, D.C.: USMC, 1932), 801–100.
- 34. Ibid.
- 35. Ibid.
- 36. Ibid., 804 -700.
- 37. Ibid., 804-600.
- 38. Laguerre, The Military and Society, 72.
- 39. Ibid., 76.
- 40. Heinl and Heinl, Written in Blood, 464-65.
- 41. Herbert Gold, *Best Nightmare on Earth* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 2.
- 42. Ibid., 27.
- 43. Heinl and Heinl, Written in Blood, 562.
- 44. Laguerre, *The Military and Society*, 110, and Trouillot, *Haiti: State Against Nation*, 156–57. Dr. Bryant Freeman met Papa Doc Duvalier and notes that the terror he imposed in Haiti began after a severe medical episode in which Duvalier had lapsed into a coma. Papa Doc was never the same afterwards.
- 45. Laguerre, The Military and Society, 114.
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- 48. Fauriol, "U.S. Policy," 48-49.
- 49. Elliot Abrams, "Haiti: Playing Out the Options," in *Haitian Frustrations*, 67–70.

50. Georges A. Fauriol and Andrew S. Faiola, "Prelude to Intervention," in *Haitian Frustrations*, 103.